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Media Contact: Rebecca Dreilinger (202) 225-8203

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**(Chicago, IL)** As Vice President Joe Biden this morning visits Serious Materials, site of the former Republic Windows and Doors factory that abruptly closed its doors in December 2008, U.S. Representative Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) also announced new legislation to strengthen protections for laid-off workers.

Under the federal WARN Act, employers are only required to provide 60-days notice if a mass layoff impacts at least 500 employees or a third of a workforce that is greater than 49 employees at one employment site. H.R. 2077, the Alert Laid off Employees in Reasonable Time (ALERT) Act, amends the definition of a "mass layoff" to include layoffs by one employer at more than one worksite. In addition, this bill would increase the penalty for violating the WARN Act, doubling back pay for violated workers, among other protections.

"I have introduced the ALERT Act because current federal law does not go far enough in protecting the hardworking men and women who are the backbone of our economy," said Rep. Gutierrez. "With unemployment levels on the rise, widespread layoffs have ravaged our nation's workforce. The former employees of Republic Windows know too well that too often workers are provided with virtually no notice to prepare for unemployment, and the WARN act is not a strong enough deterrent in protecting them from employers who would abuse the system. We owe more to our workforce; we owe them laws that are as strong as their work ethic."

Last December, Rep. Gutierrez engaged the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Justice to investigate Republic Windows and Doors when it abruptly gave its 250 workers three days notice. With the holiday season less than three weeks away, the factory appeared to have violated the WARN Act by leaving employees without compensation and without health insurance. Gutierrez helped negotiate a settlement with Bank of America, Republic Windows and Doors and the United Electrical Workers to ensure that workers were paid their

rightfully-owed eight-weeks salary, all accrued vacation and two months paid healthcare.

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